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A Metrical Medley for The Months.

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A Metrical Medley

for

The Months

MARY SALTONSTALL PARKER

AUTHOR OF

At the Squire's in Old Salem
Salem Scrap Book
Rules for Salad, in Rhyme
A Baker's Dozen of Charades

SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

1897

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January

JANUARY SHOPPING.

In rubber boots your feet encase,
Prepare the stinging sleet to face.
The papers have announced the fact
That "Thin materials are unpacked;
The cause in hand brooks no delay."
This summons, shivering, we obey.
Perhaps 't will warm us up to gaze
At muslins, thinking of the days,
When, in the shade at ninety-six,
The motionless quicksilver sticks!

January

'Twixt sunset and the dawn some night,
The Old Year passing from our sight,
A new one taps upon the pane.
A great gift 't is to start again;
Old faults and errors left behind,
A new and better path to find,
While all untried, close veiled it lies,
Withheld in mercy from our eyes.
To all of us the vanished years
Are very dear; they hold no fears;
And from their treasury we may choose,
At will, the themes on which to muse.
Old friends, old wine, old books, they say,
Excel those we can make today.
So let us not from past years turn;
The best of lessons we should learn
From them, to take into the New,
To help us all the twelve months through.

February

Some youths and maidens of today
At sentiment are scoffers.
They more for filthy lucre care,
And dote on well filled coffers.
For them what flowery ways are closed,
The outlook must be stupid!
But there are those who take, I know,
Much interest yet in Cupid.
They, products of our Century's end,
Still, Valentines delight to send.

February

AN APPEAL.

Oh Valentine, dear Valentine,
I cannot all my hopes resign!
How more could any fellow strive?
Bouquets, not less than twenty-five,
I 've sent; while as to candy, she
Has been supplied a year by me.
I 've played her golf; 't was sometimes tame—
(I let her beat me every game.)
Through town, and country roads abreast
We've wheeled, while I my love confest.
She ran me down; I felt no ire—
(Five spokes demolished, and my tire!)

'T is absolutely necessary
On this fourteenth of February,
Some daintier token to confer,
Than any yet bestowed on her.
Somehow or other, I have felt,
Dear Saint, today her heart you'd melt.
And then—I have a bright idea!
I will not send her things or see her
For one whole month. It may be, then,
She 'll want to have me back again—
It is not being weak though, is it,
To pay tonight just one more visit?

March

Your rough dried gowns bring out and starch,
To celebrate the first of March!

March

A SEASONABLE SUGGESTION.
(ACROSTIC.)

Hail, March! Thou first Spring month, all hail!
O'erhead the north wind blows a gale.
Lay not yet off your warm attire,
Draw up about the blazing fire—

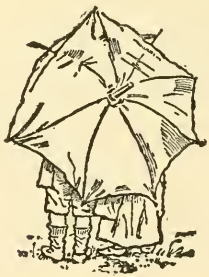
O, to see Winter go is sweet!
(**N**umb, very numb, are hands and feet.)

Thermometers, all lying low,
On upward flights refuse to go.

High time it is our furs to pack;
(**A**ccording to the Almanac.)
'**T** is gentle Spring! Hook up that coat
Securely round your chest and throat.

April

No longer is it to their heels
That culprits take, but to their wheels,
While any modern Lochinvar,
His bride upon his handle bar,
Instead of horse's back, would fling,
And keep ahead of everything!



April

THE BICYCLE GIRL.

Oh a wondrous girl is the winter girl,
To marvel at and adore!
As with gown like snow, and her slippered toe,
She floats o'er the ballroom floor—
The queen she plays, and her sceptre sways
O'er worshippers galore.

What a dainty girl is the summer girl,
You know, or at least have read,
With her shoe low laced, and her crisp shirt waist,
And her sunny and hatless head.
Such a charm she wrought through the summer short
And her nets unconscious spread!

But of early spring and these maids I sing,
As her wheel each gaily mounts,
And the curbstone leaves, with windfilled sleeves,
And a tiny lurch and bounce.
Ah, 't is not the winter or summer girl—
It 's the bicycle girl that counts!

May

Gardens and milliners are thriving,
Towards quarters new are tenants driving.

May

On May day summer's near, we say,
Chill is the air and skies are gray;
Yet nothing can obliterate,
(Though blow relentlessly as Fate,
East winds each morning, bleak and raw,)
The proofs we long have waited for,
In plant that, wakening, strikes its root,
And trees with budding pledge of fruit.
Most of us, very likely, can't
A vegetable garden plant,
For lack of time and space; why not
Attempt a tiny flower plot?
'Gainst some black fence have hollyhocks,
Pinks by the path, and four o'clocks.
(No flowers though, till the second year
Upon the hollyhocks appear.)
Some corner you'll reserve, I hope,
To have a bed of heliotrope.
A few good plants will quickly spread,
Making a sweetly odorous bed.
Nasturtiums in the poorest soil
Will thrive; their chance 't is hard to spoil.
Mere market produce never brings
Joy like these simple flowering things.
All plants prosaic, things to eat,
Are cheap and plenty on the street.
But one exception I suggest,
Leave to the farmer all the rest.
Sow a small bed with radish seeds,
Growing, they look like common weeds,
They need no care; and O, at tea,
How appetizing 't is to see,
On cracked ice laid, with surface scraped,
Their crisp roots long or bulbous shaped.

June

Sight seeing fiends! Those bold invaders,
More zealous are than old Crusaders.
In June they first begin their quest,
And soon in swarms our streets infest.
Old and historic points they seek,
And bargains drive for things antique.
So far they go, they oft will try
The chairs from under us to buy!

June

With length of days, and June's first heat,
We hear the tread of strangers' feet,
Who come to find, from homes remote,
The places of which Hawthorne wrote;
Inspecting Salem's "outs and ins,"
The Museum and the witches' pins,
Picking up cups and China plates,
Of quaint device and ancient dates.
At Hawthorne's birthplace long they stand,
A guide book open held in hand,
And watch, with fascinated eyes,
The smoke from out the chimney rise,
Thinking, no doubt, it could not smoke
Like chimneys of mere common folk!
And now they turn their faces west,
As 't were till last they 'd kept the best;
Their guide points out a rocky spot,
A windswept, barren hillside lot,
Whereon, "as near as he can tell,
The witches bade this world farewell."
Oh, truly something is amiss,
That people love to dwell on this,
For Salemites should blush to touch on
This only blot on their escutcheon!

July

Nature impels us to select
A summer night for retrospect,
Past joys and griefs thus blended seem
A harmony wound through a dream.

July

The crescent moon begins to show
Wan in the sunset's dying glow,
The bird and insect notes combine
With deep toned bell of distant kine.
My lonely heart goes out in quest
Of all those dearest souls, and best,
Who, year by year, one now, one then,
Have passed beyond our human ken;
For scenes less fair were far more dear,
Were they but here, were they but here!

August

These lines he will appreciate who knows
A boarding house, with its attendant woes!

August

How fares the man who boards experience taught us
In early life by sea, or mountain range,
And yet, resigning still our good home quarters,
We yearly seek (and find it too!) —a change.
The meals you may recall, whose menu varies
In naught but many different kinds of pie,
While, just like bathtubs used for pet canaries,
Crowding the table, little dishes lie;
Someone perhaps will recognize that lady
Who to herself appropriates a chair,
Whence she may overlook the driveway shady,
And likewise may command the front hall stair.
She "wonders much what boys and girls are made for,
And why their mothers bring them up so ill;
Do I suppose Miss Klondike's rings are paid for?
Can 't anybody keep those children still?
They 're ten times worse to her than are mosquitoes,
It sometimes seems that she must go insane—
Unless next year the host their presence vetoes
He need n't hope to see *her* here again.
Which is the elder, now, Miss Jane or Hannah?
And have I heard what things are being said?
She whispers,—bottle, walk, peculiar manner,—
At any rate his nose is *very* red.
There came again today, for Blank, three letters,
Whom they can be from goodness only knows!
Those girls there have no reverence for their betters,
They fill up all the best chairs with their beaux—
That end piazza 's *always* being 'sparked' on,
Miss Solid must weigh quite two hundred pounds."
Thus every fellow boarder is remarked on
Until at one, the dinner bell resounds.

September

The touch of Fall when we discern
In white hoar frost, and leaves that turn,
Just be admonished by these signs,
Look out for your tomato vines!
Lest some night by a heavy frost
The green tomatoes all be lost;
And you must let the chance go by
This special rule of mine to try.

September

MINNESOTA PICKLE.

Of green tomatoes one half peck,
A cabbage without flaw or speck,
Cucumbers ten of ample size,
Peel fifteen onions (shut your eyes!)
Chop all these up together fine,
Add salt (that product of the brine),
Let this two dozen hours remain,
And then with care the liquid drain.

Three quarts of vinegar, put down
With just three pounds of sugar brown,
Of pepper one eighth pound you need,
Drop in an ounce of celery seed,
Add four green peppers, hard and sound,
Of mustard seed a good half pound.
Last one half cup of turmeric
Is wanted for the mixture thick.
This boiled, and steaming yet, you pour
On what you chopped the day before;
Three following days, so reads the rule,
Bring to a boil and let it cool.

When cool the last day, there is brought
Of vinegar quite cold one quart,
A teaspoonful of curry, too,
(That powder of the tawny hue).
And now at length a quarter pound
(Or slightly less) of mustard, ground,
Mixed in a cup of salad oil,
Stirred in the pickle, ends the toil.
Then bottle, cork, and tightly stop,
With paraffine spread o'er each top.

Your palate it will so allure,
That you next year, I feel quite sure,
Unless your taste proves very fickle,
Will make some Minnesota pickle!

October

As friends, now moving back to town,
Around your table meet
Pray give them, when they come to tea,
This short cake for a treat.

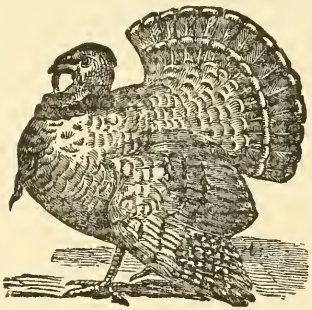
October

SHORT CAKES (ENGLISH RECEIPT.)

Of finely powdered sugar, you
Must weigh twelve ounces, butter too
One pound, with twice this weight of flour;
Rub these with energy and power,
Not minding though your wrist may ache;
This with four eggs a paste will make.
Roll out and cut, as you may care
To have the cakes round-shaped or square.
The thickness make one quarter inch,
And all the edges neatly pinch.
Some sugared caraways then drop,
With citron splinters stuck on top,
An oven *warm* you must rely on,
To bake these cakes on plates of iron.

November

The lengthening nights this time of year,
Proclaim Thanksgiving drawing near,
Sitting indoors by cheerful lamp,
Defying outside cold and damp,
You might perhaps enjoy a bit
Of guessing, to employ your wit.
Not too much puzzling will you do
At these charades, I promise you.
The answers, any one who hunts,
I 'm certain will espy at once!



November

No. 1.

My *first* is just the merest dot,
A little mote or tiny spot;
This found, upon the *second* start,
Of you, and of your soul a part.
My *third* the lame and lazy get,
And cause their friends to fume and fret,
Oft is it to our names applied,
In mention of us when we 've died.
My whole to do the bulls and bears
Delight, whene'er the chance is theirs.

No. 2.

My *first* and *second* people cry,
For those who start to reach my *whole*.
"A glittering phantom, sure it is,
Which lures them to that distant goal,"
But some who, setting forth, have naught
Save change of clothing in their pack,
May need, if lucky, one whole *third*,
To bring their treasure coming back!

December

The heart with Christmas blessing stow;
There cultivate and let it grow.
Take to the poor as you have means;
Take to the churches evergreens,
And wreathe the wealth from woodland paths
Above our altars, and our hearths.

December

How often, when we 're bent on Christmas shopping,
We catch words like the following on the street,
"So tired am I, and faint, I 'm almost dropping,
Before my list is even half complete.
This vase will do, I think, to give Eliza,"—
"Yes, only much too good for *her*, my dear;
I trust that Uncle Joseph will (the miser!)
A nice large cheque make out for us this year."
This is the way, at Christmas, of so many,
Of nine, it seems at least in every ten,
That peace on earth for them there is n't any,
And very little of good will to men.
The Christmas world should mantled be in whiteness,
The frosty air breathe energy and vim,
Our hearts and spirits must be bathed in brightness,
And all our thoughts be like the Angels' hymn.

Irving K. Annable,
Salem and Boston.

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